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## **Sturgeon Life Cycle Fact Sheet**

There are six major life stages of an Atlantic sturgeon. The first stage of an Atlantic sturgeon is an embryo. The second stage is a yolk sac larvae. An Atlantic sturgeon's third stage in their life cycle is a larvae. Sometimes scientists or researchers may also call sturgeons in this stage fry. The fourth stage happens when the fish becomes a fingerling. Next the Atlantic sturgeon enters the fifth stage, and is called a juvenile, or subadult. The last, and sixth stage of the sturgeon is when they grow up and become an adult.

An embryo is an egg. Fertilized eggs that survive develop into fish. After the fish hatch from the embryo they enter the second stage where they are called yolk sac larvae.

When the larvae first hatch out of the egg, they still have the yolk sac attached to them. This yolk sac helps them survive by initially providing the nourishment they need while they are growing. Fish at this stage are not able to hunt or eat other food. In order to survive yolk sac larvae remain on the bottom or sides of the river, under rocks or vegetation in order to hide from predators.

When the yolk sac is completely gone, the sturgeon enters the next stage as a larvae or fry. Without the yolk sac attached to them they are able to move better and forage or look for food. At this stage they become much more independent and are able to hunt for food on their own. The diets of larvae consist mostly of vegetation, zooplankton, and small insects. As the fish grow they enter their next stage called a fingerling. Fish at this stage are usually around the size of a human's finger. When the fish get larger they may begin to migrate downstream where they will stay as juveniles.

As the fish grow, they enter the fifth stage of a juvenile or subadult. These sturgeons are not mature adults yet. Atlantic sturgeon reach the last stage in their life cycle when they become adults. As adults they are mature and able to reproduce.

## Atlantic Sturgeon Life Cycle Images

